

# Interracial News Service

A DIGEST OF TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN HUMAN RELATIONS

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## for ... HEALING of the NATIONS\*

As American citizens, we may take satisfaction in the progress being made toward improved relations among racial groups within our nation. The sweeping indictments of American life which were justifiable twenty or even ten years ago must be qualified and limited when they are made today. It is becoming easier for a man to get and hold a job regardless of his ancestry. Travel in public conveyances is more congenial for Negroes than it was. In some cities it is less difficult for a member of a minority group to rent or buy or build a home in an attractive neighborhood. The franchise is denied to fewer persons and the political effectiveness of members of racial groups is gradually becoming what it should be — their effectiveness as individual citizens, regardless of group identity. A long series of court decisions is gradually opening up the universities of the nation to all persons solely on the basis of individual merit, and it is not unreasonable to hope that segregation in education at all levels will end. Sporadic expressions of violence still mar the record; but lynchings are so rare that we may soon be able to say that they no longer take place in the United States.

All these things are good signs of sanity and decency. They are important demonstrations of the fact that Americans are uneasy in conscience and therefore are moving to correct segregation and other forms of discrimination. The unevenness of progress, and our embarrassment when political expediency or deep-seated traditions provide formidable obstacles, do not destroy the hope of greater advance throughout the whole nation. All things considered, the citizens of the United States may take a measure of genuine satisfaction over improved relations among racial groups within our borders.

But there is a disquieting lesson to be drawn merely from the fact that we have to stop and take note of such progress. This nation was founded on the religious principles of freedom, equality and fraternity. As we approach the end of two centuries of national life, we still have to ask ourselves whether we are building on those foundations. If there were no sincere efforts to realize the basic goals of a free and democratic people, we would stand convicted of hypocrisy for having lived so long with the compromises of segregation and of social and political discrimination. Surely there must come a time when it will no longer be necessary to observe Race Relations Sunday in our churches or to fight for the rights of racial minority groups or to decry the presence of prejudice. Surely we must with confidence look forward to a day of mental and spiritual health, unmarred by racial prejudice, which is a sign and symptom of illness both of mind and of spirit.

Moreover, while it is true that great progress has been made within the churches in bringing about a greater awareness of the demands of brotherhood and in the practice of racially inclusive membership by an increasing number, it must be recorded, to our shame, on this Race Relations Sunday that it is within the churches themselves and in church-related institutions that significant advances need to be made. It is still true that only in exceptional instances do white and non-white Christians worship regularly together. In some church-supported colleges, racial prejudice and discrimination in social life contradict their Christian profession. In many church-related hospitals and homes discriminatory practices still prevail. Is it not strange that religion, which is a force for the healing of the nations, is itself hampered in its influence by the sickness of racial prejudice?

Indeed, it can be said that, judged from the perspective of Christian insight, even the progress made in secular life is belated and far from adequate. The demands of Christian conscience are so clear and unmistakable, the road so straight and unavoidable, and the oft-repeated convictions so unequivocal and compelling, that the genuine satisfactions of partial progress in secular affairs are cancelled out by the continuing condemnation of ourselves for failing to live as children of God, brothers one of another.

Finally, when the whole matter is viewed in world-wide perspective, the healing of the nations calls for a medicine which — up to this moment — we, as Christians, have been unwilling to take. The non-white peoples of the world are unconvinced by a Christianity which accepts a color line. If we really believe that true religion is for the healing of the nations, and if we intend to continue offering to others the leaves and fruits of the Tree which grows beside the River of Life, there is but one appropriate way: we must practice what we preach, match creed with deed, and express in our lives the truths we claim to believe.

\* Message of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., for the 32nd Annual Observance of Race Relations Sunday, February 14, 1954. For the drafting of this Message the National Council of Churches is indebted to Dr. Buell G. Gallagher, President of the College of the City of New York.

[The matter in these pages is presented for the reader's information. Unless so stated, it is not to be construed as reflecting the attitudes or positions of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations or of The National Council of Churches.]

# PRELIMINARY REPORT\* OF SPANISH SPEAKING PERSONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CHURCHES WITH PREDOMINANTLY WHITE MEMBERSHIP

Prepared by

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## Introduction

The basic purpose of this preliminary report is to provide an indication of the kind of data which is being gathered in this survey and to show its relevance in assisting the churches to provide an adequate ministry to Spanish speaking persons within the local church and neighborhood. The responsibility of a church to serve the members of its community on an inclusive basis is clearly set forth in the official statement and resolution adopted by the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., in Chicago, Illinois, June 11, 1952. This document states in part: "Christians in the United States, more than ever before, honestly desire that quality of Christian fellowship which brings to the total Church the gifts of all for the spiritual enrichment of each."

The Christian gospel, to be a dynamic force and pattern for living in a society composed of persons of many racial and cultural backgrounds, in its practice and teaching must be a builder of cultural bridges irrespective of differences contingent upon circumstances of birth or past environmental conditioning. In the light of this basic Christian belief this report will attempt to relate data, already gathered, to three basic hypotheses which follow:

1. Protestant churches which are white and English speaking can render full service to Spanish speaking persons.
2. Social distance factors<sup>1</sup> operate with reference to the frequency and distribution of the presence of Spanish speaking persons among the congregations of the three Protestant denominations participating in an over-all study.
3. The pattern of relationships of Spanish speaking persons within congregations which are predominantly white and English speaking presents a configuration which indicates the operation of social distance factors *within* the local congregation.

## Source of Data and Scope of Study

The data used in this report have been extracted from a larger study on the development of racially-inclusive congregations which is now being processed by the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations; the Center for Human Relations Studies, New York University; and

the Social Action Divisions of three Protestant communions: the United Lutheran Church in America, the Congregational Christian Churches<sup>1</sup>, and the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

Questionnaires were mailed to 13,597 local churches in these three communions. A total of 4,810 replies has been received from the 48 states, Alaska, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Cuba. Two hundred and sixty-nine churches reported the presence of Spanish speaking persons in their congregations. These data were gathered in 1951.

This report, which is a preliminary one, will treat briefly the data on the following subjects: geographical distribution by state of the churches reporting the presence of Spanish speaking persons; the place of origin of the Spanish speaking persons involved; and types of relationships that Spanish speaking persons have with the churches.

## Analysis of Data

The 269 churches reporting the presence of Spanish speaking persons are located in 31 states and the District of Columbia. Two hundred and twenty-six of these churches are located in 13 states: California, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Minnesota, Nebraska, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania (See Table for geographical distribution by state). The states with the largest number of churches having Spanish speaking persons are: California, 68 churches; New York, 34 churches; Colorado and Illinois, 16 churches each; and Pennsylvania 15 churches.

Ninety-five churches reported the presence of persons of Puerto Rican origin; 182 reported persons of Mexican origin; 8 reported Cubans and 9 reported persons of other Spanish speaking groups. Twenty-one churches reported the presence of persons of two Spanish speaking groups and 2 reported persons from 3 groups. Eighteen of the 21 churches reporting 2 Spanish speaking groups, indicated the presence of persons of Puerto Rican and Mexican origins. Of the 117 churches reporting Spanish speaking persons in the states of California, Colorado, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico, 106 churches indicated that the persons were of Mexican origin and 14 indicated that they were of Puerto Rican origin. Of the 51 churches reporting Spanish speaking persons in the states of Minnesota, Nebraska, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio, 44 indicated that the persons were of Puerto Rican origin and 11 indicated that they were of Mexican origin. Of the 58 churches reporting Spanish speaking persons in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, 48 indicated that the persons were of Puerto Rican origin and 11 indicated that they were of Mexican origin.

One hundred and nine of these churches reported the presence of Spanish speaking persons without the presence of

non-Spanish speaking racial minority persons in the congregation. One hundred and sixty churches reported the presence of Spanish speaking persons along with the presence of non-Spanish speaking racial minority persons in the congregation. In most of the cases the non-Spanish speaking racial minority persons were Negroes and Orientals. In the South-western states a number of churches reported the presence of American Indians along with Spanish speaking persons.

The data were gathered on six categories of relationships which these Spanish speaking persons had to the churches. These data were gathered from 253 churches of two Protestant communions, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the United Lutheran Church in America. The categories of relationships and the number of churches in which these relationships occur appear on the Graph. The minimum number of persons involved in each of six categories is as follows: church membership, 586; church school, 787; young people's society, 203; women's society, 92; other church organizations, 139; church attendance (non-members), 591. Since these categories obviously are not mutually exclusive, the data do not reveal the total number of Spanish speaking persons involved in the 253 churches. The average number of persons per relationship per church is as follows: church membership, 2.1; church school, 2.92; young people's society, 0.7; women's society, 0.3; other church organizations, 0.5; church attendance (non-member), 2.1.

Spanish speaking persons were reported as church members in 136 churches; church school members in 156 churches; young people's society members in 67 churches; women's society members in 40; members of other church organizations in 36 churches and attended church (non-members) in 119 churches. (See Graph.)

The crude modes of the numbers of persons involved within each category of relationship are as follows: church membership, 1 with the number ranging from 1 to 50 persons; church school, 2 with the number ranging from 1 to 80 persons; young people's society, between 1 and 2 with the number ranging from 1 to 25 persons; women's society, 1 with the number ranging from 1 to 12 persons; church attendance (non-member), 1 with the number ranging from 1 to 41. In 103 churches Spanish speaking persons had one type or category of relationship and in 150 churches, they had from 2 to 6 types or categories of relationships.

## Implications and Interpretation

Census data indicate that along with the congestion and consequent increase of the general complexity of problems incidental to increased in-migration to metropolitan areas, there is an ever-widening area of dispersion of Spanish speaking persons. This is reflected in the analysis of the geographical distribution of churches reporting the presence of Spanish speaking persons. For instance, of the 68 churches in California, 60 reported the presence of persons of Mexican origin and of the 34 churches in New York, 28

\* This report is made as an extraction of data from a larger study on racial inclusion among churches in three denominations.

<sup>1</sup> Social distance factors are defined for purposes of this study as those cultural and personality elements which tend to aid or retard and preclude the development of a relationship of togetherness in a situation or situations involving people of different racial or cultural backgrounds.

<sup>1</sup> L. Maynard Catchings, "A Report on the Participation of Racial and Nationality Minority Peoples in Congregational-Christian Churches", American Missionary Assn., Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., 1946.

reported the presence of persons of Puerto Rican origin. In addition to this, there are smaller aggregations in 29 other states. It seems logical on the basis of census data to assume the gradual development of a larger number of smaller areas of concentration as well as the growth of the major areas of concentration themselves. The rate and the direction of this development would depend on several factors, chief among which might be the opportunity for Spanish speaking persons to be engaged in industrial or agricultural work — other than seasonal. "The greatest increases (in Spanish speaking population) were found in the industrial states where Puerto Ricans are increasingly in demand as semi-skilled and unskilled workers."<sup>1</sup>

This increasing rate of settlement by Spanish speaking persons in industrial areas, where they have not heretofore been located, should receive the immediate and constructive attention of the churches. At least two basic considerations seem relevant to planning religious facilities for Spanish speaking persons.

In the first place, the conception of ecumenicity, which includes racial and cultural minority persons, not as groups but as persons, is a consideration. It should be pointed out that this preliminary report is based upon 269 instances where persons of Spanish speaking background are served in some degree within an institution also serving a larger cultural group. Additional data from the three denominations in question indicate that there were (in 1950) less than forty separate congregations<sup>2</sup> of Spanish speaking persons in the continental United States.

The figure of 269 churches should be placed in juxtaposition to the forty separate congregations of Spanish speaking persons just mentioned. While a number of questions need to be examined in connection with the above two figures, they seem to suggest at least the importance of considering whether the best use is made of the total resources available to the churches when separate edifices for Spanish speaking persons are encouraged in communities. This is especially relevant in communities in which a small number of Spanish speaking persons is present. Another facet of the same question needs to be examined. For example, in eleven Spanish speaking churches in two denominations, there are approximately 1,173 members as over against the fact that in the 269 churches the minimum number of members is 586. This then raises the further question, which is

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCHES\* REPORTING THE PRESENCE OF PERSONS OF SPANISH SPEAKING ORIGIN

State	Total Number Churches Reporting	Total No. Churches Reporting Persons of Puerto Rican Origin	Total No. Churches Reporting Persons of Mexican Origin
ALABAMA	—	—	—
ARIZONA	9	1	9
ARKANSAS	—	—	—
CALIFORNIA	68	10	60
COLORADO	16	—	15
CONNECTICUT	2	1	1
DELAWARE	—	—	—
FLORIDA	2	1	—
GEORGIA	—	—	—
IDAHO	1	—	1
ILLINOIS	16	4	11
INDIANA	2	—	2
IOWA	1	—	1
KANSAS	3	—	3
KENTUCKY	—	—	—
LOUISIANA	—	—	—
MAINE	—	—	—
MARYLAND	3	1	1
MASSACHUSETTS	2	1	2
MICHIGAN	8	3	5
MINNESOTA	7	2	5
MISSISSIPPI	—	—	—
MISSOURI	6	3	4
MONTANA	1	—	1
NEBRASKA	7	3	5
NEVADA	—	—	—
NEW HAMPSHIRE	—	—	—
NEW JERSEY	9	9	1
NEW MEXICO	12	—	11
NEW YORK	34	28	7
NORTH CAROLINA	1	1	1
NORTH DAKOTA	—	—	—
OHIO	13	3	8
OKLAHOMA	4	2	3
OREGON	2	1	1
PENNSYLVANIA	15	11	3
RHODE ISLAND	1	1	1
SOUTH CAROLINA	—	—	—
SOUTH DAKOTA	—	—	—
TENNESSEE	1	1	—
TEXAS	12	3	11
UTAH	—	—	—
VERMONT	—	—	—
VIRGINIA	—	—	—
WASHINGTON	3	1	1
WEST VIRGINIA	—	—	—
WISCONSIN	3	1	3
WYOMING	1	—	1
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	4	3	4
TOTAL	269	95	182

\*Not shown are 17 churches reporting Cubans and other persons of Spanish speaking origin.

prominent in the minds of some administrators, namely: What is the best way to serve the maximum number of people with the resources available? This cannot be the only consideration. As important, if not more so, is the *relationship* of numbers to basic considerations of Christian belief about human beings as well as to basic principles of human relations.

The locus of the dispersion area for persons of Mexican origin as well as that for persons of Puerto Rican origin cautions against the lumping together of two culturally different groups simply because there is a common language factor. In fact, the analysis has shown that less than 25 churches of the 269 reported upon, indicated the presence of persons from more than one Spanish speaking group. Suffice it to say now that the matter of language difference is doubtless one of the chief factors operating to produce the pattern of relationships. Further research

will be needed to explore the role of the language factor as well as the roles of certain class concepts which operate to facilitate, retard or preclude the inclusion of these cultural minority persons within the Christian fellowship.

The configuration of relationships held by Spanish speaking persons to the church and its organizations indicates a strong possibility of social distance factors operating *within* the fellowship in local groups. It is noted, for example, that the frequency of the presence or participation by Spanish speaking persons is far greater in those relationships to the church, which require the minimum amount of communication and intimate social interaction, than is the frequency of the presence or participation found in those relationships involving more intimate interaction. The data revealed that a larger number of persons participate in the churches as church members, church school members and as non-members attending the church.

<sup>1</sup>Senior, Clarence, "Dispersion of Puerto Rican Migration." A speech delivered at the Annual Conference, Welfare and Health Council of New York City, May 7, 1953. Mr. Senior is Chief, Migration Division, Dept. of Labor, Puerto Rico. (In mimeographed form).

<sup>2</sup>This term is used to designate congregations with church edifices. A larger figure, not at this time accurately ascertainable, would include what are termed "preaching stations," or "mission points," etc. Data do not yet reveal upon what criteria mission or preaching stations or separate congregations for Spanish speaking persons are established as over against the inclusion of persons of this cultural group within an on-going church organization.

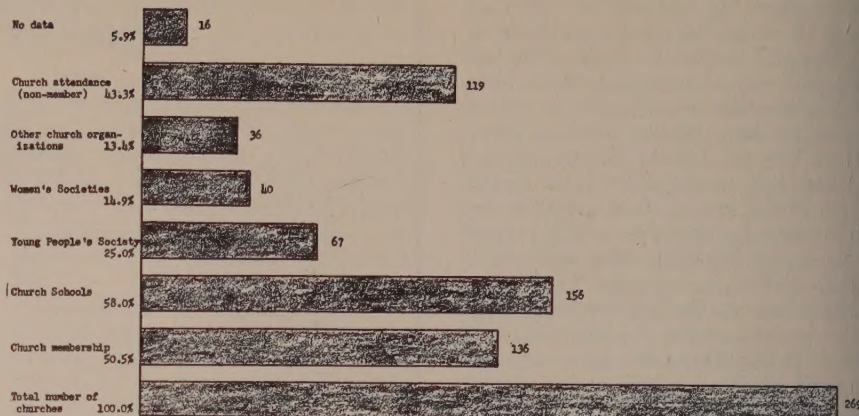
A substantially smaller number of Spanish speaking persons was reported in women's societies, young people's societies, and other similar organizations within the church, which require a pattern of closer interpersonal relations.

The extension of this study will seek answers to questions such as (1) What, if any, are the social distance factors which operate in developing this configuration? (2) If the answer indicates that there are certain factors operating at this point, then what are the ways and means which have been used by local groups in developing their present pattern of relations with Spanish speaking persons? (3) What suggestions can be derived from the data to guide local leaders in the elimination of social factors which retard or preclude Christian fellowship across cultural lines?

The crude mode of the minimum number of persons involved in the various church relationships is indicative of at least two possible situations. (See Analysis of Data). It could be that the mode is indicative of a small number of Spanish speaking persons residing in the neighborhood. This would consequently limit the number of persons that might be involved in a given church. Also, it may be that the crude mode is only a token representation of the Spanish speaking persons in the community. It should be pointed out, nevertheless, that in most instances the churches reporting the largest numbers of Spanish speaking persons were located in metropolitan or large city areas.

The weight of the data in hand indicates change which is interesting and which is in the direction of ministry to persons without regard to racial, cultural or national origin, but numerous questions remain to be answered. Some of the more urgent questions will have to have special attention in the extended survey, since they relate so fundamentally to the churches and their accepted mission. However, it does seem proper at this point to raise a question which presents itself from the data in the larger body of research; namely, is the 'welcome sign' really out? We have discussed 269 cases where, in varying degrees, persons of Spanish speaking background have been included within an English speaking and a larger cultural group. For example, it would be proper to know if in reference to Spanish speaking minority persons the principles of brotherhood and of the evangelical mission of the churches are practiced with the same or similar kinds of reservations as expressed toward some other racial or cultural minority persons. The hurdling of the language barrier is not facilitated, for example, when an official governing body of a local church voted officially "to accept anyone" without regard to racial or cultural background into its fellowship but emphasizes that this is "not to be encouraged". Problems of outreach, to those in need of social and spiritual security which might be afforded by the church, are multiplied, for instance, when a minister presents for membership a name of a racial or cultural minority person, and the name is promptly tabled or

Types of Relationships of Spanish-speaking People with Churches having Predominantly White and English-speaking Membership



(Percentages are figured on 269 churches)

left for an indefinite period as a means of avoiding the presence of newcomers. People in the church who say "We do not need these 'furriners'" not only express an attitude about a new racial or cultural group, but raise serious questions which cannot be overlooked by any responsible group of Christians. Nor is it exactly the ideal of Christian fellowship to say: "They have churches of their own; let's not encourage them to come here . . ." or "We cannot serve them in this community because there is no Spanish speaking church here." Another deterrent to a positive and full ministry by the churches to Spanish speaking persons is the oft-voiced assumption that all Spanish speaking persons are Roman Catholic and therefore Protestant churches have no responsibility for serving them. The data, even at the preliminary stage of the study, invalidate this assumption.

Still another determining factor in the process of developing inclusive community ministries is recognized within the actual process of developing contacts with Spanish speaking persons. The wider research, upon which this preliminary report is based, makes possible the statement that in about half of the known histories of contact with persons of a racial minority

group, the initiative came from the racial minority person. This might be judged by some as an example of "meeting halfway" but it says little for the cardinal principles of brotherhood and the evangelical mission of the churches.

## SUMMARY

This preliminary report is an indication of the dispersion pattern of Spanish speaking persons among churches in the United States and within the three denominations under study. It raises certain basic issues for the churches in their planning for ministries in communities where persons of Spanish speaking origin reside. These issues involve other basic principles of the Christian faith as well as concerns for sound organizational, administrative and financial planning.

Problems in building an atmosphere of an all-inclusive fellowship are indicated.

This report occurs *after* one stage of data collection has taken place and before the major data collection process has begun.

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